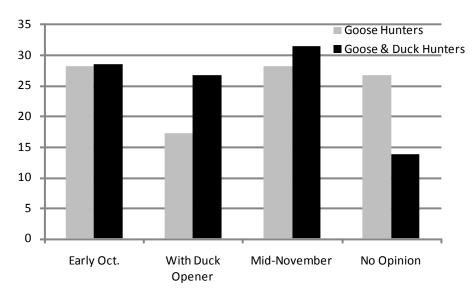
## **Hunter Opinions about Canada Goose Season**

While hunter input plays an important role in determining duck hunting season dates, it plays a lesser role in regards to Canada geese. Population status of giant Canada geese and EPP Canada geese are the primary considerations. We consider the timing of Thanksgiving weekend, Christmas/New Year's week and the need to provide early season opportunity as additional factors affecting goose season recommendations.

Preferences among Canada goose hunters have shifted dramatically since the 1980s. Growing numbers of giant Canada geese, delays in migration of the EPP Canada geese, and a wider distribution of geese in Missouri have contributed to these changes. Traditionally, hunters indicated a desire for concurrent duck and goose openers (73% in 1988 and 63% in 1996), but by 2002, this became less important with only 48% wanting concurrent openers. As migrant Canada geese began arriving later in Missouri, more hunters desired late season hunting opportunity, with 72% of respondents to the 2002 survey indicating it was important to have goose season open as late as possible.

In order to assess hunter preferences about the timing of the first segment of Canada goose season, we included a survey question asking goose hunters after the 2008 season if they preferred the first segment of Canada goose season to occur in early October, at the beginning of duck season.

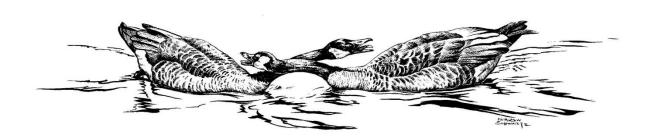
Figure 1. Goose hunter opinions of when the first segment of Canada goose season should open.



or right before the regular Canada goose season. We then looked at the responses of the 91% of goose hunters that hunted both ducks and Canada geese and the 9% of goose hunters who only hunted Canada geese. Among hunters who hunted both ducks and geese, opinions were nearly equally divided among all three options (Figure 1). Only 17% of the individuals who hunted only geese preferred the first segment to open concurrently with duck season. This group was evenly split between the other two options with 28% preferring an early October opener and 28% preferring a mid-November opener.

After the 2008 season, we also asked goose hunters if Missouri could offer more Canada goose hunting if they would prefer increasing the bag limit from 2 to 3 geese during the regular season

with no change in season length, or increasing season length by about 25 days so the regular Canada goose season could open on the last Saturday in October with no changes in the bag limit. Those who hunted both ducks and geese were nearly split in their opinions; 45% preferred a larger bag limit, 50% preferred more days, and 5% had no opinion. Among those who goose hunt only; 57% preferred a larger bag limit, 35% preferred more days, and 8% had no opinion. The potential for liberalization would depend on the status of resident Canada geese and migrant Canada geese, including EPP geese. If Missouri's resident population would begin growing, allowing additional days before migrant geese arrived would be an option. If the Missouri Canada goose population was stable or declining and migrant populations of giant Canada geese were growing or above objective levels, then increased bag limit during the regular season may be more preferable.



## North and Middle Zone Considerations:

North and Middle zone Canada goose hunters are beginning to hone in on the last week of December and the first two weeks of January as their preferred week to hunt Canada geese. Thirty-nine percent of North Zone goose hunters and 54% of Middle Zone goose hunters indicated their preferred week to hunt Canada geese was during this period (Figure 2 and Figure 3).

## South Zone Considerations:

Delayed migrations and few resident giant Canada geese have traditionally contributed to late season hunting preferences among South Zone goose hunters. On average, from 2004-2008, 53% of South Zone goose hunters indicated they most preferred to hunt geese in January (Figure 4). Even more hunters held this perspective in 2009 with 69% indicating they preferred to hunt Canada geese in January. Twenty seven percent indicated that they preferred to hunt Canada geese during the last week of January.

Figure 2. North Zone - Week most preferred to hunt Canada geese.

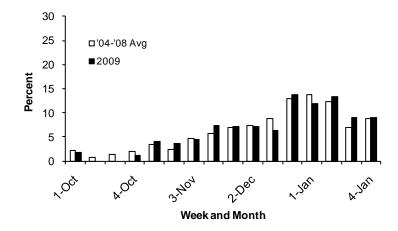


Figure 3. Middle Zone – Week most preferred to hunt Canada geese.

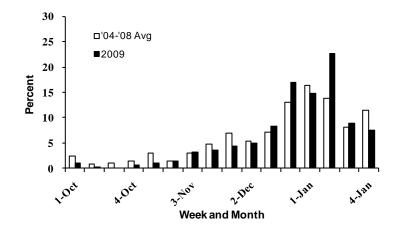
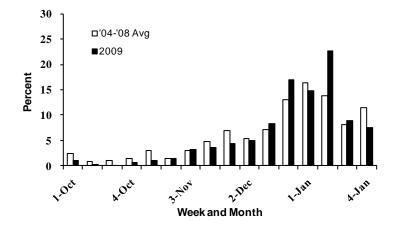


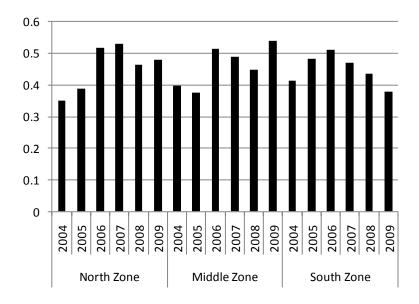
Figure 4. South Zone – Week most preferred to hunt Canada geese.



## **Goose Hunter Satisfaction:**

Goose hunters responded favorably to the changes in Canada goose season structure implemented in 2006. In the North Zone, where hunters experienced bag limit restrictions in 2004, the percent of hunters satisfied with Canada goose season dates climbed from 39% in 2005 to 53% in 2007 (Figure 5). Middle and South Zone goose hunters also responded favorably with nearly 50% of goose hunters indicating satisfaction with Canada goose season dates. However, in 2008 and 2009,

Figure 5. Percent of goose hunters satisfied with Canada goose season dates, 2004-2009.



years with record harvest, hunter satisfaction with season dates dropped below 50% in the North and South zones.

After the 2009 season, we also asked goose hunters how satisfied they were with daily bag limits (Figure 6). In each zone, more hunters were dissatisfied with daily bag limits than were satisfied with them. Over 40% of North Zone goose hunters expressed dissatisfaction with the daily bag limit of 2 geese.

45 ☐ Satisfied ☐ Neutral ☐ Dissatisfied

Figure 6. Goose hunter satisfaction with the size of the daily bag limit.

